

For Immediate Release
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TDOT Response to University of Tennessee "Lessons Learned" Report

General Responses

- TDOT requested the study of 15 projects
- UT has done an excellent job evaluating the 15 projects
- The UT team of researchers have outstanding professional credentials
- TDOT responses to the 15 project reviews will be announced in the next three weeks
- "Lessons Learned" is a valuable review of TDOT practices with applicability to many other projects and plans

Specific Responses to "Lessons Learned" Conclusions

Section 3: Agency Identity

- Through the TDOT internal strategic planning process, the mission of TDOT is being redefined
- The Statewide Long-range Multi-modal Plan will emphasize all modes and the relative balance that should be achieved between investments in each
- TDOT is establishing strengthened relationships with other agencies, including TDEC, ECD, EPA, Corps of Engineers, TVA
- A primary initiative of Commissioner Nicely is the involvement of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) and local governments in transportation project planning
- Another primary initiative of Commissioner Nicely is increasing public involvement in all phases of transportation planning and project design

Section 4: Project Development and Planning

- The Long-range Multi-modal Plan process will provide a basis for distinguishing between project "feasibility" and project "need"
- Strengthening of TDOT's environmental planning capability will provide greater evaluation of impact analysis earlier in the project planning process; community impact analyses will be included in this capability
- As identified in the previous study by the Office of the Comptroller, project planning must be documented and tracked; the Long-range Multi-modal planning process will include organizational strengthening to maintain such accountability

Section 5: Project Impacts Assessment

- Environmental impacts of all projects will be evaluated using the federal NEPA model, regardless of funding sources
- TDOT's organizational capability to conduct thorough environmental analysis is being increased, including the appointment of a new director and the appointment of a Chief of Environment and Planning
- Community Impact Analysis and Context Sensitive Solutions are being actively incorporated into TDOT's planning and design process; the first major TDOT training in these techniques is scheduled for November; a major project using Context Sensitive Solutions is underway in Kingsport (the Memorial Boulevard project.)

Section 6: Project Design Issues

- As noted previously, TDOT is actively incorporating Context Sensitive Design and Solutions techniques into roadway, interchange and other project planning and design processes. Responses to many of the 15 projects reviewed by UT indicate this commitment

Section 7: Public and Community Involvement

- Commissioner Nicely has made expanded public and community involvement a high priority; the very nature of the assignment given to the UT research team is evidence of this commitment, as is the creation of the Community Relations Division
- Interactive and ongoing citizen involvement is a cornerstone of TDOT's new focus on community relations; the recent Record-a-Comment system announcement is just another part of this commitment
- The Long-range Multi-modal Plan process will create the broadest opportunity in the history of our state for involvement in the transportation planning process
- As evidenced by the responses to each of the 15 projects reviewed by UT, public and local community involvement has become a major component in the next steps for large and often controversial projects